

16 August 2019

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – August, 2019

I will be on vacation in September, the 3rd through the 19th. I try to always be reachable when I am away, although sometimes local internet access makes that difficult.

Promote, support, and expand resource sharing to optimize use of tax dollars and other funding and help libraries share resources to the fullest extent possible

In your packet, you will find letters from the LLSAP directors describing the activities and services that RAILS support grants enabled them provide to member libraries in FY2019. These letters are great window into the resource sharing that RAILS supports through the LLSAPs: activities that directly benefit libraries and their end users.

RAILS will be applying for a grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) as part of the effort to ensure a complete count for the Census in 2020. The grant is organized on the basis of geographic regions, 12 in all for Illinois. We are applying to be a Regional Intermediary for the collar counties – Lake, McHenry, DuPage, Will, Kane, Kankakee, Grundy and Kendall – as designated by IDHS. We will work with “sub-recipients” to deliver funds so that local libraries and their partners can deliver the appropriate services to hard-to-count areas as determined by IDHS and the federal government. The grant is due on September 6. Funds available to serve the collar counties is between \$1.8 and \$2.2 million. We will hire an individual to oversee the program as part of the grant.

Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

Mary Witt and her team will report on the “My Library is...” campaign at the meeting. We have gotten a lot of interest from libraries in this campaign. It is obvious there is a big need for this kind of assistance from RAILS.

Help libraries be the best they can be

By the date of the board meeting, I will have completed visits to five board member libraries – Fountaindale, Vernon Area, Northern Illinois, Waukegan and Kane County Law Library and Self Help Center. I look forward to more visits in the future.

Prepare libraries for the future

My latest Sparks podcast is now available. I spoke with Magan Szwarek, Director of Reference Services at the Schaumburg Township District Library about the Panorama Project. This project, sponsored by Overdrive, is gathering data on the effects of library author programs on the purchase and borrowing of the author’s books. It provides insight into the effects of libraries on book readership and purchases, and will certainly shed light on publishers claims that libraries hinder ebook sales.

We have distributed (electronically) a survey to find out more about services that member libraries provide to the unserved residents of their areas. One of the charges to the Universal Service committee is to gain greater understanding of what libraries are already doing to serve the unserved, not only to increase our overall understanding but also to expand implementation of these services more broadly.

Aim to be the best library system in the country

As I reported last month, Jane Plass is retiring on November 15. We are in the process of developing the recruitment materials and timeline for this important position. We are planning a local and national search. Of course, we are also planning good-bye events and will keep the board updated.

Hopefully, the Executive Committee will have selected their candidate to fill the RAILS school board seat by the date of the board meeting, and the new board member will be at the meeting to begin their service.

This Month at RAILS – August 2019

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

Leading/Working with Libraries to Expand Resource Sharing



[Find More Illinois](#) allows library patrons to search multiple Illinois library catalogs at one time. Patrons from participating libraries can also place requests and pick up items at their local library.

Hometown Public Library recently joined Find More Illinois. The library has a standalone integrated library system and does not use OCLC, so Find More Illinois greatly expands its interlibrary loan options.

Find More Illinois participants now include:

- 1 academic library
- 28 public libraries
- 4 school libraries
- 5 libraries in implementation process

Providing Access to Digital Content/E-Resources/Other Innovative Projects

BiblioBoard Update

Last month, we told you about Inkie, our new Illinois self-publishing project. We continue to work on the Inkie website, which is not yet live. We have completed the first draft of copy for the site, and are now in the process of editing content and adding additional links and resources. We are also working on a publicity plan to announce the site to our members.

In other news, BiblioBoard created a unique instance of our collection just for schools (<https://railsforschools.biblioboard.com/home>). It combines content from the Time for Kids, ABDO, Recovering the Classics, Spotted Owl Press, and BiblioBoard Core modules. This provides a solution for schools that have expressed concerns about the age-appropriateness of some content in BiblioBoard Library. It also streamlines the browsing experience for school-aged

students. We plan on heavily publicizing this unique instance to teachers and school library staff.

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Update

Baker & Taylor updated the Axis 360 app in July. The update incorporates new technology for the reading mechanism within the app. Not only did this update fix several persistent issues, it also paves the way for more advanced updates to Axis 360 in the future.

We continue to have regular meetings with B&T to assess progress on the app, the website, and to troubleshoot issues. We are looking forward to the release of the redesigned Axis 360 app in the coming weeks.

Explore More Illinois Continues to Grow



[Explore More Illinois](#) is RAILS' online cultural pass program that offers discounts and incentives from attractions throughout the state of Illinois to patrons from participating libraries. The latest addition to our attraction line-up is Vermilion County Museum, in Danville, Illinois.

The museum is part of the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area and it showcases exhibits relating to Vermilion County history, Abraham Lincoln, coal mining, and early natural history. Explore More Illinois now has 21 attractions and 206 libraries currently participate.

Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

RAILS Member Meetup in Princeville



RAILS held a member meetup on August 6 at Lillie M. Evans Public Library District in Princeville. Thirteen people attended to network and share ideas. Discussion topics included the new \$15 minimum wage in Illinois, hiring new employees, and managing library budgets.

There was also a presentation on the [Bike the Trail Library to Library Project](#), which was partially supported by a RAILS Partnership Grant (see photo).

RAILS Holds Special Library Networking Event at John Deere in Moline



RAILS held a special library networking event at Deere & Co. headquarters in Moline on July 16. Thirty people participated, including librarians from Illinois and Iowa.

This event was co-organized by the Illinois and Iowa chapters of the Special Libraries Association. It included a tour of the facilities, a presentation by Deere library staff, and a discussion of library-related issues.

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story



Library Marketing Plans Workshop

When RAILS surveyed our libraries to find out how we could best help them through our [My Library Is...](#) campaign, many told us they needed help developing a marketing plan. As a result, RAILS has scheduled two identical, in-person workshops titled “What Does a Library Marketing Plan Look Like, and What Does it Do for You?”

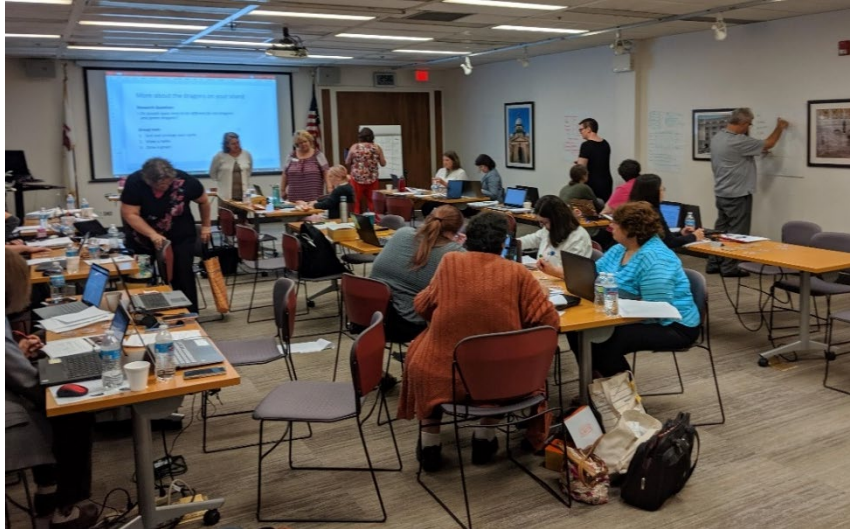
Topics will include how to involve library staff in marketing at all levels and how to create and prioritize goals and timelines. More information is available on L2, following the links below.

- [Wednesday, September 25](#), 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Chillicothe Public Library District
- [Thursday, September 26](#), 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Fountaindale Public Library

July Continuing Education on Library Data

Throughout the month of July, RAILS continued to offer CE on library data as part of our [My Library Is...](#) campaign. Approximately 50 RAILS members attended two identical workshops

held July 10 and 11 at Peoria Public Library and our Burr Ridge service center titled “Introduction to Statistics for Librarians.” This full-day intensive workshop focused on providing a solid understanding of basic statistical functions and how to use software such as Microsoft Excel more effectively.



The following week, Becky Yoose of LDH Consulting Services conducted a webinar for over 100 RAILS members focused on data privacy. “Wrangling Library Patron Data Privacy,” now available in the [RAILS CE Archives](#), explored library practices that put patron privacy at risk, as well as ways that library staff can mitigate those risks.

Note: Board members will hear the latest news about the *My Library Is...* campaign during the Service of the Month portion of the August board meeting.

Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be

Ensuring Ongoing Library Staff Development

Space Planning Webinar

On Tuesday, September 17, from 1:30-3:00 p.m., David Vinjamuri will give participants the framework to analyze the current use of their library space and consider various steps for improvement. This webinar is a condensed version of the full-day workshop held at Gail Borden Public Library in the spring. RAILS Board members are welcome to attend. [Register on L2](#).

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Member Communication/Engagement

Member Visits

RAILS visited four public libraries in the Rockford and Peoria regions in late July and early August. Highlights included seeing the Eagles Nest Art Gallery at Oregon Public Library, learning about John Mosser Public Library's mascot, Dory the Pug, and touring Farmington Public Library's beautiful building.

Save the Date for October 3 RAILS Member Update

RAILS offers quarterly sessions to update members on our latest news and to give them an opportunity to share what is happening at their libraries. The next update is scheduled for Thursday, October 3, from 10 a.m. – noon. RAILS Board members are invited to attend. Watch for further details coming soon!

RAILS at August/September Library-Related Conferences

RAILS exhibits at library-related conferences whenever possible. This gives us the perfect opportunity to engage with a number of our members all in one place. We will be at the following conferences in August/September.

Health Science Librarians of Illinois (HSLI) Conference

RAILS will have an exhibit table at the HSLI conference, September 11-13, in Champaign. Nicole Zimmermann, Marketing and Public Relations Specialist, will be on hand to talk with the health and medical science information professionals in attendance about what RAILS can do for them. Nicole will also provide an update on RAILS during the conference program.

HSLI provides a good opportunity to engage with members we seldom see at other venues. Approximately 50 library staff attend and almost all of them stop by our table to chat with us.

PrairieCat Users Group Day (PUG Day)

PrairieCat is one of the [six shared catalog](#) consortia supported by RAILS, and PrairieCat members are also RAILS members. RAILS will have an exhibit table at PUG Day on September 20, at the Northern Illinois University Conference Center in Rockford. Brian Smith, Applications & Web Developer, will be on hand to share the latest information about RAILS programs and services. As of this writing, 247 people are registered to attend the event.

SWAN Expo

As mentioned last month, RAILS will also have a table at the SWAN Expo on August 16. SWAN is another one of the shared catalog consortia supported by RAILS.



Ms. Deirdre Brennan, Executive Director
Reaching Across Illinois Library System
125 Tower Drive
Burr Ridge, IL 60527

Subject: Report to RAILS of FY2019 Support to PrairieCat

Dear Deirdre,

I am happy to submit this annual report to RAILS on behalf of the PrairieCat members. FY2019 was another eventful and successful year for PrairieCat, and much of what was accomplished was due to the support RAILS provides. During FY19, RAILS grant funds helped provide our 14 staff (12 FTE and 2 PTE) to directly support PrairieCat's 136 libraries that are located in 14,000 square miles across northern Illinois. Many PrairieCat members are small public or school libraries who depend on PrairieCat and RAILS staff support and training to be successful at their libraries. In FY 19, PrairieCat staff made 49 site visits to members, provided 335 training sessions representing 2,086 training contact hours, and closed 3,387 help desk tickets. In addition, we held 78 member meetings or events, which included participation from 1,597 member staff and resulted in 4,267 contact hours of interaction with membership.

The RAILS LLSAP grant opportunity provided in FY2018 allowed the Marseilles Public Library to go live on our system in late August 2018 (FY19). Marseilles is a new member, joining at the Basic Online level. Byron Public School District, a former Union List member, also came back into PrairieCat in FY19. All three of their schools will now be adding their records to our database, whereas they formerly only incorporated the high school into PrairieCat.

The biggest project this year, by far, was the integration of the eight former NIC libraries into PrairieCat. Thanks to an LLSAP grant from RAILS, we were able to add these libraries to our consortium, expanding our reach and the depth of our collections available to patrons across our service area. As a result of this merger, we have added an additional 235,000 unique titles and 927,000 new items to our catalog. The former NIC libraries came live on our circulation systems on May 22, 2019.

Some other significant accomplishments during (or shortly after) FY2019 were:

- The fifth annual PrairieCat Users Group (PUG) Day was held on September 28, 2018. Attendance at the 2018 event was 220. PUG Day was held at the Taxslayer Center in Moline, and will move to Northern Illinois University at Rockford in FY20. The event has grown significantly in size and scope over the last few years. Again this year, we were awarded a RAILS CE grant, which was used to provide funds for our keynote speaker presentation and two other breakout session

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presenters. RAILS once again helped us make this event a success.

- In conjunction with RAILS website staff, the PrairieCat User Experience committee and other members participated in several focus groups to redesign our support website. The new website, which provides a simpler interface and much better organization, was launched in FY19.
- PrairieCat kept pace with Innovative upgrade rollouts, and most recently upgraded to V. 4.3 of the Sierra software.
- We remained an Innovative Strategic Partner this year, and participate in early review and give feedback on new products as they are released by the vendor. Our staff and board members continue to attend vendor conferences and participate in the growth and development of our ILS platform.
- Regional, zone-based member update meetings continued in FY19. Meetings are held twice yearly in April and November to promote member engagement and communication. These continue to be popular, and attendance has grown during the three years that we have held them.
- The ByLaws and General Policy Manual were updated and revisions approved, along with changes to the Circulation and Technical Services Policy and Procedures Manuals.
- PrairieCat continues to produce a popular monthly e-newsletter, PING, as well as a Facebook page and twitter feed.
- Several PrairieCat members were involved in the Find More Illinois pilot project, and more have joined as the project has moved forward. We continue to encourage participation among our members.

The support that RAILS provides to PrairieCat is greatly appreciated and allows the consortium to maintain costs and provide essential services to the 2 academic, 100 public, 32 school and 2 special library members of PrairieCat. In addition to financial support, in FY19 RAILS provided PrairieCat with Information Technology, Finance, and Website support. Throughout the year, RAILS staff and their expertise provide invaluable services to our PrairieCat member libraries. RAILS support enhances PrairieCat's ability to meet the consortium's shared mission of "engaging members in sharing resources effectively and equitably, expanding the quality and quantity of information accessible to our library users." As PrairieCat moves towards more independence and sustainability in future years, it is hoped that our relationship will remain strong and continue to grow.

Sincerely,


Carolyn Coulter

PrairieCat Director

Cc: Anne Slaughter, RAILS Director of Technology Services

August 1, 2019

Deirdre Brennan, Executive Director
Reaching Across Illinois Library System
125 Tower Drive
Burr Ridge, IL 60527

Subject: Report to RAILS on FY2019 Support to the Resource Sharing Alliance NFP

Dear Ms. Brennan,

The Resource Sharing Alliance NFP (RSA) provides library automation services to public, school, academic, and special libraries across central and west central Illinois. RSA is made up of 147 member libraries in 196 locations spread across 13,500 square miles of the state. RSA's membership consists of 95 public libraries, 46 school libraries, four academic libraries and two special libraries. RSA support primarily small libraries including 66 public library members serving populations under 5,000 and 40 school library members with less than 1,000 students. RSA serves approximately 935,594 total public library patrons in our service area. RSA's founding and guiding principle is that resource sharing, of both the automation system and library materials via ILL, is absolutely required to provide excellent library service to patrons across all sizes and types of libraries.

RAILS provides personnel to support RSA's automation system and libraries as part of the annual support agreement. This allows RSA to operate a smaller staff and not worry about benefits, HR, and other day-to-day administration issues. In FY20, RSA's support staff consisted of 10 full time positions. Due to staff turnover and retirements, our Member Services Department is completely new in the past 12 months. The changes occurred simultaneously with our Strategic Planning process. This allows us to totally rethink of our training, library visit and support practices and will enable us to modify our support to fit our member's expectations. Only two RSA member libraries have MLS catalogers on staff, which makes our centralized cataloging services, original cataloging, database maintenance and clean up, and cataloging training absolutely vital and supports our increasingly complex automated patron services. RSA also provides all the backend automation system support, configuration, maintenance, backup, security and thousands of reports for our member libraries. RSA will be adding 2 new positions in FY20 and we will outline requirements for an additional 2 to 3 staff in our Strategic Planning Process. RSA's huge number of small libraries and school libraries combined with all the new, modern library services patrons expect requires additional support staff,

RSA continues to work with libraries upgrading their membership level or joining RSA via the RAILS grant process. In the past year, we completed the process with two libraries, and we continue to work with three new libraries who are still cataloging their collections. RAILS provided grant funds for Astoria PL to join RSA in the fall of 2019. At this point in time RSA is basically 'full'. RSA's current staff load does not allow us to add additional libraries while still fully supporting our existing members. We hope changes to the membership model from our Strategic Plan will help us better define our support levels and services to our smallest members to reduce the time required to support them and free up time for additional members.

The RAILS support formula allocation is what allows the vast majority of RSA member libraries to remain in the system. RSA is working to better inform member libraries the actual amount of RAILS support, per library, provided as well out pointing out the difference between RAILS and RSA services. Our Strategic Plan will outline new membership levels and fee structures which will include sections in the formula for RAILS support via grant funds so that member libraries and their Boards know exactly how much support RAILS provides. This information goes a long way towards building good will towards RAILS and hopefully fixes persistent knowledge gaps.

RSA again offered all 138 automated RSA members full membership in eRead Illinois. This allows RSA to receive a 30% rebate on this service and ensures all our small public and school libraries have access to a vibrant eBook platform and collection.

RSA continues to work with our 3rd party vendors to help them develop many services and products that will help our members. For example, RSA is a Pilot participant in the new online Acquisitions module SirsiDynix is developing. We are also any early adopter of the BLUEcloud Mobile app and contributed to consortia worldwide by breaking it in many new and unusual ways. We are hard at work helping SirsiDynix find, fix, and modify this new, state of the art, mobile app to better support large, complicated consortia like RSA.

As previously mentioned, we are completely rethinking almost all aspects of RSA's services, training, membership levels, and support models. RAILS moving to Zoom for online conferencing has opened many new doors to online training that will fill many gaps identified in our current training offerings and our members inability to attend training here in East Peoria.

RSA, as part of the RAILS consortia committee, has helped define cataloging standards for RAILS members. We continue to work on ways to provide additional in-house cataloging to our members. Our cataloging request form allows members to submit items not in our catalog for full cataloging by RSA staff. This ensures a high quality database and has removed many thousands of brief or poor quality records. Having a professional cataloging staff in-house results in faster holds times for patrons as well as better search results. Our cataloging request volume was up 25% again this year. Outstanding support by RAILS delivery services and the overall support grant have allowed us to continue to grow this vital department.

The RSA Board of Directors fully supports the RAILS expansion of the LLSAP Support Grant to all consortia inside RAILS and well as Find More Illinois. The Board appreciates RAILS facilitation of intra-consortia contacts, committees, resource sharing projects, delivery, and financial services. The RAILS - RSA partnership allows even our smallest members to expand their services and provide a great patron experience.

Thank you for your continued support. It allows RSA to provide library automation and resource sharing services at affordable prices to all our Public, School, Academic and Special libraries.

Sincerely,



Kendal T. Orrison

LLSAP Services Manager / Executive Director, Resource Sharing Alliance NFP

Cc: Anne Slaughter, RAILS Director of Technology Services

Cc: RAILS Board of Trustees



August 1, 2019

Deirdre Brennan, Executive Director
Reaching Across Illinois Library System
125 Tower Drive
Burr Ridge, IL 60527

Subject: Report to RAILS of FY19 Support to SWAN

Dear Ms. Brennan:

In accordance with the terms of the RAILS-SWAN support agreement, SWAN is providing a report of how RAILS support has improved, enhanced, and sustained services to the citizens of Illinois. SWAN currently provides services to 97 public, academic, and special libraries in the Chicago metropolitan area that benefit directly from the support and activities of its regional library system.

First and foremost, RAILS support overall keeps SWAN affordable to our member libraries. The coordination and collaboration with RAILS allows SWAN to continue its commitment to mission-critical library services while focusing on valuable enhancements. During the fiscal year 2019 (FY19) SWAN changed its cost for membership whereby public libraries fees are discounted based on the financial support RAILS provides. The use of the "LLSAP Funding Award" discount on each public library's membership fee highlights the contribution of RAILS LLSAP funding and its value to each public library within SWAN.

RAILS grant opportunities allowed Green Hills Public Library District to join SWAN in February 2019. Green Hills patrons benefited immensely from SWAN membership. Green Hills Public Library is in the heart of "SWAN country." The Green Hills district coverage shares a border with seven SWAN libraries, including Oak Lawn Public Library, Worth Public Library, and both Palos Heights and Palos Park. Located in Palos Hills, Green Hills patrons were heavy SWAN users, representing the second highest level of registered reciprocal borrowers in SWAN (after Chicago Public Library). The RAILS Catalog Grant allowed Green Hills to join SWAN through a financial support of one-time data migration costs.

Some other significant accomplishments during the past fiscal year were:

- Replaced SWAN's support website through a joint project between SWAN's User Experience Manager and RAILS Applications & Web Developer Brian Smith. Brian provided valuable insight, feedback, and input throughout the website revision and was an integral part of the successful launch.
- Completed a 5-year strategic plan for the 2019-2023 period.
- Migrated the consortium servers in the RAILS data center to a new cloud-based infrastructure-as-a-service.
- Coordinated and hosted an all-day library community event for RAILS libraries to attend at the Moraine Valley Community College Business and Conference Center. The RAILS Continuing Education grant allowed us to have keynote speaker Gene Ambaum from Unshelved Comics present to over 400 attendees.
- Completed an OCLC reclamation of SWAN library holdings through a grant from the Illinois State Library, arranged by RAILS.
- Performed a National Change of Address update to all patron records in SWAN's unified patron database, which ensured patron's who moved are now properly aligned with their home library.
- Completed a two usability studies with patrons and publicly issued written reports for all RAILS libraries to benefit from direct study and observation of patron use of an online catalog and research interfaces.
- Deployed a new software module called Outreach for SWAN libraries to use for services to homebound patrons or senior living centers.
- Launched web application for an automatically generated delivery label to allow libraries in SWAN to print a restick label for routing materials via the RAILS delivery service.

SWAN also utilizes RAILS Finance for services. The financial expertise provided has allowed SWAN to function under sound guidelines and practices following the accounting principles of GASB for better budget planning and management of its funds contributed by its member libraries.

Sincerely,



Aaron Skog

SWAN Executive Director

CC: Anne Slaughter, RAILS Director of Technology Services
RAILS Board